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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCFE](#) [OSCE](#) [PARM](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VORONIN SUPPORTS U.S. CFE PROPOSALS

REF: SECSTATE 146521

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a cordial meeting with President Voronin, DAS David Kramer presented elements of our forward-leaning CFE package proposals delivered in Moscow. Arriving in Moldova after his Moscow talks, Kramer said the U.S. had presented this package to the Russians, and is waiting for the Russian response. The goal is to get the Russians to agree to remain within CFE. In that regard we have encouraged the Russians to help restart the stalled Transnistria talks as soon as possible. The three-part package relevant for Moldova involves agreement on (1) a meeting involving the 5 2 to make a serious push on a Transnistrian settlement that would in turn create conditions for the rest of the package, (2) the removal, or destruction in place, of the munitions at Kolbasna; and (3) the introduction of a new OSCE mandate to have civilian observers monitoring the peacekeepers, with the goal of demilitarization. President Voronin strongly approved this package approach. END SUMMARY.

Linking Transnistria Settlement to CFE

¶2. (C) In an October 19 meeting, DAS David Kramer, the Ambassador, and EUR/RPM Deputy Director Jennifer Laurendeau briefed President Voronin on the recent 2 plus 2 meetings in Moscow on CFE, as well as Kramer's own talks there which took place earlier. Kramer thought the Russians would take no further actions to fulfill their Istanbul commitments, and if this continued until December 12, would go ahead with their announced suspension of CFE. The USG is thus trying to find creative ways to elicit further movement in the context of a package approach linking a Transnistria settlement to CFE ratification. Kramer made that linkage clear to the Russians. The USG insists Russia has to move forward on Istanbul commitments, while the Russians believe (1) there is no link between Istanbul and CFE and (2) in any case, they have already fulfilled what they undertook to do in Istanbul.

Kramer suggested to Voronin that if the Russians withdrew on December 12, any further movement on these issues would be virtually impossible.

¶3. (C) Kramer said he found his counterpart during the CFE talks in Moscow, Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin, to be a decent professional, in sharp contrast to the notoriously-difficult Russian negotiator for Transnistria, Nesterushkin. Karasin gave the impression that the Russian side wants a resumption of talks, though Kramer thinks Karasin's hands are tied. Kramer had stressed that absent Russian pressure on Transnistria to resume the talks, there would be no progress on a Transnistria settlement and Russian troop withdrawal. Kramer said Secretary Rice had endorsed efforts to get the Transnistria talks back on track. Starting the process of CFE ratification would be contingent upon Russian agreement to the CFE package presented in Moscow. Kramer said that the Russians want the allies to

move forward with ratification, but the USG cannot move forward unless we have an agreement in principle on the Moldova commitments. Ratification could come in phases, with some of the allies ratifying earlier than others; the USG might be one of the last to ratify.

The Three-Point Package

14. (C) Kramer explained the parts of the CFE package relevant for Moldova. Step one would be to get the Transnistria talks resumed. Next would be to either remove or destroy in place the Russian armaments at Colbasna. Voronin and Kramer agreed this would be easy to accomplish if the Russians decided that they wanted to do it. Kramer stressed the need for transparency and preliminary site inspection, as there have been many reports that the Transnistrians have long since sold the munitions, and no one knows for sure what is there. Some discussion ensued about the possibility of destruction of munitions on site. As the Russians have frequently argued that the Transnistrians would not allow them to remove the munitions, in situ destruction might be a better alternative.

During the Moscow talks the Russians said that objections came from Ukraine and Moldova. Voronin said that Moldova had no problem with in situ destruction and undertook to reach out to Ukraine to consider a joint statement that Ukraine and Moldova would support in situ destruction of Russian armaments. With the armaments gone, all agreed there would be no need for the 600 soldiers guarding Colbasna to remain in Transnistria.

15. (C) Taking into account Voronin's previous comments that no fighting would break out if peacekeepers were withdrawn, Kramer proposed a new OSCE mandate to have civilian observers

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monitoring the peacekeepers with the goal of demilitarizing the region. Voronin and his advisor Marc Tkacuk were both very pleased with this idea. Voronin suggested a deal with the Ukrainians, that both Moldova and Ukraine start by unilaterally removing their peacekeepers, to be replaced by OSCE civilian observers. Withdrawal of troops and munitions would mean that the backbone would be taken out of the Transnistria regime. Some movement in the settlement process would be necessary before the Russians would take this step.

Next Steps on Transnistria

16. (C) Ambassador Kirby said that both he and David Kramer will attend the OSCE-sponsored informal 5 plus 2 get together in Odessa October 23. President Voronin promised he would issue a press release emphasizing Moldova's readiness to return to 5 plus 2 negotiations without any pre-conditions. Ambassador Kirby praised President Voronin's useful public diplomacy in the past weeks, reaching out to the Transnistrian people directly via interviews in Russian-language press. The Ambassador mentioned his September trip to Tiraspol, in which he had met with both the obstinate Transnistrian Foreign Minister Litskai, as well as the more constructive Parliamentary speaker Shevchuk. The Ambassador had also attended the October 11 3 plus 2 meetings in Vienna, and expressed conviction that the upcoming Finnish chair will provide better leadership than the Spanish presidency had. He expects the Finnish chairman to come to Moldova by the end of January or February, but to send someone earlier in December to start the process.

Moldova Working to Improve Relations with the Russians

17. (C) President Voronin spoke of his participation in the October 5-7 CIS Summit in Dushanbe where he brought up Transnistria during his brief bilateral with Russian President Putin. Voronin reported his impression that the Kremlin was playing one game, and the Russian MFA was playing

another, while Putin was simply unaware of what was going on in Transnistria. Their meeting did not result in any agreements to achieve any kind of breakthrough, and was just an exchange of impressions. In response to DAS Kramer's direct question asking whether Voronin was optimistic that Putin wanted to solve Transnistria, the Moldovan President responded ironically "not very much."

¶18. (C) President Voronin said he has been working to improve his bilateral relations with the Russians, trying to resolve all outstanding bilateral issues such as the wine ban, in order to clear the plate so that only the Transnistria settlement remains. As an example of improved Russian-Moldovan relations, Voronin noted that on Monday October 22 an inter-parliamentary commission is expected to pay a return visit to Chisinau, following the Moldovan delegation's two-day working visit to Moscow. Most outstanding issues are already resolved, so Voronin hopes focus on a Transnistria settlement will now be possible.

Comment

¶19. (C) President Voronin clearly welcomed the U.S. initiatives and DAS Kramer's engagement, and seemed pleased to be offered some new possibility for forward movement. The Moldovan president twice suggested joint action with the Ukrainians in support of this package, both on removing peacekeepers, and on dropping opposition to in situ munitions destruction. Voronin's confident expectation that the Ukrainians would go along with his proposals suggests that he is counting on the orange-coalition to be a constructive partner in helping to reach a Transnistrian settlement.

¶10. (U) DAS Kramer cleared this cable.
KIRBY